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**Defensive Campaigns:
Are They Still the Stronger Form of War?**

**A Monograph
by
Major Armor D. Brown
Armor**



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**School of Advanced Military Studies
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ABSTRACT

DEFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS: ARE THEY STILL THE STRONGER FORM OF WAR? by MAJ Armor D. Brown, USA, 54 pages.

On a theoretical level, defensive campaigns are the stronger form of war. As Clausewitz said, "All things being equal defense is the stronger form." However on the practical side defensive campaigns can only remain the stronger form of war if they are conducted properly according to theory and doctrine, and if campaign planners understand the concept of asymmetry.

This monograph will review theory and doctrine on defense and defensive campaigns according to Clausewitz's thoughts in on On War. This will be followed by an analysis of two campaigns and finish with a conclusion based on analyses of the two campaigns.

Using criteria derived from Clausewitz's On War, an examination of two historical cases, the Russo-Polish War in 1920 and Desert Storm in 1991 will show how the advantages of defense are still valid. However, the successful commander and staff must understand that using Clausewitz's criteria is not enough in the present. The asymmetry of armed forces must be considered, so the campaign planners can make the most of advantages such as technology and negate disadvantages.

This monograph concludes that in the early twentieth-century when all things were equal defensive campaigns were the stronger form of war. However, today this may not be true due to the asymmetry of armies. To plan successful defensive campaigns, planners must use Clausewitz's criteria as a guide and understand the concept of asymmetry.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Thus, a defensive campaign can be fought with offensive battles, and in a defensive battle, we can employ our divisions offensively. Even in a defensive position awaiting the enemy assault, our bullets take the offensive. So the defensive form of war is not a simple shield but a shield made up of well-directed blows.¹

During one of the last minute meetings between Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi ambassador to the United States, and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, Aziz said to Baker that the United States would lose in a war against Iraq. Aziz predicted that since the United States Army had not recently fought in the desert, thousands of American soldiers would die attempting to cross the strongly fortified Iraqi defensive line bordering Kuwait and Saudi Arabia called the "Saddam Line."²

On the morning of 24 February 1991, the United States and Coalition ground forces attacked the Iraqi Army. Within 100 hours the Iraqi Army had been defeated and forced to the negotiation table.³

The world had expected a bitter, hard-fought war, and many were astonished by the quick militarily decisive victory. The Coalition's ground offensive plan looked as if it would fight right through the teeth of the Iraqi defense. Pre-attack estimates of casualties by the U.S. Department of Defense ran as

high as 30,000 personnel; the total number of casualties was less than 200.⁴

The astonishment was due to the world knowing the Iraqi Army was exceptionally proficient at conducting defensive operations and had months to prepare for the Coalition's offensive. Based on Carl Von Clausewitz's writings in On War, many in the military believe defense is the stronger form of war. If this is true, why did the Iraqi defensive campaign fail so miserably? This question is central to this monograph.

Military theorists consider the defense to be the less decisive form of war; nonetheless it may be stronger than the offense.⁵ It is often easier to deny an enemy his objective than to pursue positive aims.⁶ This concept was true in the campaigns of the past, but is it true today?

The continued belief in the defense as the stronger form of war may affect future campaign planning in the United States military, as well as other nations. Countries with fewer military resources may advocate defensive campaigns as the primary way to achieve ends because they will continue to believe it takes less means to defend than attack.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine whether or not defensive campaigns are the stronger form of war. This monograph contains five sections.

Section I contains a brief introduction which identifies the research question. Section II, Theory and Doctrine, contains a discussion of the theory and doctrine relating to the defensive campaign. Sections III and IV, examine two major twentieth-century campaigns, the Russo-Polish War of 1920, and **Operation Desert Storm** of 1990-1991, to examine whether the defense remains the stronger form of war as postulated by the theorists and doctrinaires. The final section, Conclusions, presents the findings of the analyses of the previous sections.

II. THEORY & DOCTRINE

In his theoretical work, On War, Carl Von Clausewitz devotes Book Six to the defense. Throughout the thirty chapters of Book Six, Clausewitz expends much effort in furthering his belief that defense is the stronger form of war.

Clausewitz used the term "stronger" in his explanation of defense. According to Webster's dictionary, stronger has a variety of different meanings ranging from possessing great physical strength to having force of will. By examining the conditions during Clausewitz's time, it is possible to ascertain what he meant. Clausewitz referred to

"stronger" as the qualities of possessing great strength and capable of being defended. This is also the primary definition provided in Webster's dictionary.⁷

What is Clausewitz's concept of defense? He calls it, "the parrying of a blow." He continues by stating that "awaiting the blow" is the characteristic and primary feature that turns any action into a defensive one. Therefore, the main objective of defense is ultimately preservation of the force.⁸ Since On War is primarily a theoretical work, Clausewitz proposed that at the theoretical level, all things being equal, defense would prove superior to the offense.⁹ As Clausewitz said, "After all it is easier to hold ground than to take it."¹⁰

Viewing defense from the theoretical level could explain why the defense is often adopted in war -- primarily due to the belief that it is the stronger form of war. Clausewitz sums up his reasoning for defense being the stronger form of war by stating,

Close analysis and comparison of attack and defense will prove the points beyond all doubt. For the present, we shall merely indicate the inconsistencies the opposite view involves when tested by experience. If attack were the stronger form, there would be no case for using the defensive, since its purpose is only passive. No one would want to do anything but attack: defense would be pointless.¹¹

Clausewitz viewed campaigns as defensive if an army waited for invasion of its theater of operations.¹² The defense could be initiated in four ways; however, there are essentially two different methods. An army could defend at its border, or it could defend by withdrawing into its interior while waiting for the right opportunity and time to strike at its enemy.¹³

Clausewitz also said defensive campaigns were a mixture of offensive and defensive actions. Armies adopted a defensive posture only until they were strong enough to go on the offensive. More importantly, he wrote that offensive battles should be part of the overall defensive campaign and not only as counterattacks.¹⁴ Clausewitz also emphasized the defense as a means to transition to offensive operations and insisted on the integration of offensive actions within defensive operations. This shows that even though he understood the strength of the defense, he realized offensive actions would often have to be used to attain decisive results.

Clausewitz refined his thoughts on the defense while serving as a staff officer under General Von Phull in the Russian Army during the Russian 1812

campaign. Clausewitz had been a former student under Phull at the Berlin Institute and Clausewitz thought of him as honest but ineffectual.¹⁵ During the 1812 campaign Napoleon experienced the first in a series of defeats. He marched the Grand Armee into Russia experiencing victory after victory. After several months, he retreated with the remnants of his army that had been beaten by the weather as well as by Russian superiority. These experiences helped Clausewitz refine his theory and bring it closer to the realities he had witnessed.

According to Clausewitz's book on the Russian Campaign of 1812, Phull designed the campaign plan to withdraw the Russian Army into the interior, obtain reinforcements, gain time, and weaken the enemy with attacks by mobile detachments. Phull executed this campaign plan after consultation with the Czar of Russia since both wanted to conduct strategic operations on the flank and rear of the enemy.¹⁶ Clausewitz believed the campaign worked out its own form, instead of Phull's ideas, as it was being conducted. Clausewitz believed that the "gigantic proportions" (sic) in weather and terrain that Napoleon confronted in Russia were more than enough to cause his defeat rather than just the Russian Army alone.¹⁷ By observing the 1812 Campaign, Clausewitz

was able to discern the principles that caused success in the 1812 campaign plan. Several of these principles, but not all, were included in On War.

Clausewitz listed the principles of Phull's scheme used during the campaign. The first was proximity to reinforcements. Phull wanted the Russian First Army of the West to withdraw from the frontier into an entrenched camp near Dwina so that it could quickly receive reinforcements. Near Dwina, General Bagration's Second Army of the West would then press forward to launch concentric attacks on Napoleon's flanks and rear.¹⁸

The second principle was the weakening of the French advance. Clausewitz thought that the Russian First Army's withdrawal of only 100 miles would not be enough to cause attrition of the French unless Napoleon was checked by fortresses. But according to English calculations, Napoleon lost much in men and material the first 100 miles.¹⁹

The third principle was the attack of General Bagration's Second Army of the West on the flank and rear of the French. Although Bagration's flank attack was successful, Clausewitz thought it was not to be considered a valid feature because of the short distance covered by Napoleon's Army. Clausewitz believed that, in general, operations on the flank and

rear of the enemy would only be successful after an enemy had greatly extended its lines of operations through several hostile provinces.²⁰

The fourth principle was the entrenched camp. In other words, in a strong position a few may resist many. This principle was well known during Clausewitz's time. However, it was also essential that a defensive position have its rear area perfectly free, or at least it should make a complete system of defense by connection with a neighboring fortress to avoid the risk of starvation.²¹

Several of Phull's principles were never more apparent than in the Battle of Borodino. This is where Clausewitz realized that defense by exhaustion can be even more efficient than pursuing a battle of annihilation. Clausewitz thought Borodino was a remarkable episode of mutual attrition and exhaustion which the Russian General Kutuzov neither wanted or needed to fight.²² The frigid Russian winter also played a major factor as Napoleon's Army continued moving west even though the Russian's scorched earth tactics left no food or shelter. However, the Russian Army maintained and gained strength in its theater of operation as its lines of communication shortened. Clausewitz himself said that because of the weather and terrain, things automatically began to go well for the Russians.²³

Even Napoleon's marshalls thought that Borodino was the beginning of the end. Prior to the Battle of Borodino, Napoleon deliberated whether to make his winter encampment in Smolensk or continue his offensive. Although there were reasons, both political and military, for staying in Smolensk, Napoleon decided to continue his offensive in order to pursue the decisive battle against the Russian Army.²⁴ Napoleon won the Battle of Borodino by inflicting higher casualties on the Russians, but ultimately lost because this battle, combined with weather and terrain, prevented Napoleon's Army from continuing its offensive campaign. From that point on, the French Army was extremely vulnerable to counterattacks as it was forced to withdraw from Russia.

Clausewitz identified six criteria in Book Six which, if used to the defender's advantage, could usually lead to victory in the theater of war. The criteria are,

surprise, the benefit of terrain, counterattack by concentric attack, strength of the theater of operations, popular support, and the exploitation of moral factors.²⁵

Surprise is most effective when the defender suddenly confronts the enemy at a decisive point with far more troops than the attacker expected.²⁶ As a

principle of war, it makes sense to view surprise as an advantage especially when used in a counterattack.

Terrain is the second criterion. Besides the use of natural and reinforcing obstacles as an advantage, terrain is helpful in other ways. Concealing units in terrain, using even the most minute features, can provide advantages to those familiar with it.²⁷

The third criterion, counterattack, when combined with concentric attack, is often the decisive factor in battles and campaigns. Knowing when to conduct a counterattack or as Clausewitz called it, "employing the flashing sword of vengeance" often ensured complete victory. This is the moment when an army makes the transition to the offense.²⁸ By counterattacking at a decisive point with superiority of numbers, the odds of success are greatly increased. Counterattacks followed with successful concentric attacks often lead to encirclement and annihilation of the enemy.

The fourth criterion is the strength of the theater of operations. Naturally this benefits the defender provided he is defending in his own country. Likewise, once an attacker begins an offensive campaign, he is in constant danger of cutting himself off from supplies if he does not leave fortresses and depots behind for support of his army.²⁹ The larger

the theater of operations an army must traverse, the longer it extends its lines of communication. This weakens the army and hastens its culmination. In offensive campaigns the culminating point is the point in time and location at which the attacker's combat power no longer exceeds that of the defender.³⁰ On the other hand, the defender remains intact and continues to benefit from shorter supply lines and a relatively secure rear area. Although the defender will lose troops due to normal attrition, it is not comparable to the accelerated losses suffered by the attacker.³¹

The fifth criterion, support of the population, will not always apply. If a defender conducts his campaign in enemy territory, he can not always rely on support of the population, and will be vulnerable to attacks from the population and local militia.³² However, if the campaign is conducted in the defender's country, he can usually rely on the assistance of the local militia and greatly benefit by helping arm the population.³³

The last criterion, exploitation of moral factors, is not specifically addressed in Book Six by Clausewitz. Clausewitz believes the exploitation of moral factors is not necessarily an advantage to either the defense or offense. However, Clausewitz

believed that moral values cannot be ignored in war, and it would be an error to neglect the contributions of emotions and feelings to the outcome of battle.³⁴ Throughout history, from Napoleon's disastrous retreat from Moscow in 1812 to the German Army's retreat from Stalingrad in 1943, it has been shown that being forced onto the defensive can produce serious psychological side effects -- namely that a defensive retreat or loss of territory can cripple domestic and military morale. Neither the military nor the civilian population can tell the difference between a planned retreat and a backward stumble.³⁵ Once the Army's morale is broken it is extremely difficult to exploit moral factors as an advantage. Clausewitz stressed the moral factor of courage. He said, "Courage is the Army's sense of superiority that springs from the awareness that one is taking the initiative."³⁶ The following paragraphs will examine whether or not Clausewitz's criteria is reflected in U.S. Army doctrine.

U.S. Army doctrine in Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, dated January 1993, defines campaigns as "a series of related joint major operations designed to achieve one or more strategic objectives within an area of responsibility (AOR)."³⁷ The manual continues by stating,

Campaigns are considered defensive when the defender uses prepared positions and knowledge of the ground to slow the attacker's momentum and strike him repeatedly and unexpectedly. Generally, commanders undertake the defense only when the strategic, operational, or tactical situation makes it impossible to conduct offensive operations, or economize forces to prevent an attack elsewhere.³⁸

The FM further relates that after receiving strategic aims, the operational commander sets the conditions to achieve operational and strategic objectives within his theater of operations. By setting the conditions for subordinate commanders, the operational commander allows tactical units to fight and win battles and engagements. The operational commander will combine the attack and the defense within his defensive campaigns. He will create a shield of blows through his organization of defensive and offensive operations over time and space throughout his theater of operations or theater of war.³⁹

The following are advantages to the defense as identified by FM 100-5:

cover and concealment, advance siting of weapons, shorter lines of communications, and operations over familiar terrain among a friendly population generally favor the defender.⁴⁰

A comparison with Clausewitz's theory will show which similarities exist (see Appendix A). The

advantages of terrain are cited by FM 100-5, and Clausewitz's On War. Shorter lines of communication, from FM 100-5, compares favorably with Clausewitz's strength of the theater of operations. Operations over familiar terrain among a friendly population, is compatible with Clausewitz's criterion of popular support. Surprise, while not specifically mentioned as an advantage of the defense, is one of the nine principles of war regarded as the bedrock of U.S. Army doctrine, and matches another of Clausewitz's criteria.⁴¹ FM 100-5 also relates that the defender uses prepared positions and knowledge of the ground to slow the attacker's momentum and strike him repeatedly and unexpectedly. This compares favorably to Clausewitz's criterion of counterattack by concentric attack.⁴² Although the words may have changed, it is still evident that Clausewitz's criteria are reflected in FM 100-5.

Like Clausewitz, FM 100-5 asserts that a successful defense consists of reactive and offensive elements coexisting within a framework designed either to deprive or to wrest the initiative from the enemy. Both theory and U.S. Army doctrine stress that an effective defense is never totally passive. The defender resists and contains the enemy where he must but seeks every opportunity to go over to the

offensive.⁴³ For it is primarily through offensive operations that the enemy can be defeated decisively.⁴⁴

Clausewitz's theory says all things being equal defense is the stronger form of war. U.S. Army doctrine reflects that although defense may not be decisive, it may nonetheless be the stronger form of war. The following two twentieth-century campaigns will examine a successful and unsuccessful defense to identify whether the theoretical proposition or doctrinal assertion hold true.

III. RUSSO-POLISH WAR

Could Poland really be considered a European state, an equal among equals in the European community of nations? She could not. . . Poland had not really played a political part for a century or so; she had merely been a cause of dissension among other states.⁴⁵

Such was the story of Poland. Throughout her early history she was merely a territory of contention in Central Europe. It was not until after World War I that Poland begins to assert herself as a nation, as did the Bolsheviks in Russia. These two states would soon clash in a war of ideology and territorial expansion.

In 1920 Western Europe and the world thought that had the Soviets overcome Polish resistance and captured Warsaw, Bolshevism would have spread

throughout Central Europe.⁴⁶ Because of the belief that Poland was a bulwark against the spread of communism, Viscount D'Abernon, a British diplomat, called the Russo-Polish War the eighteenth decisive battle of the world. D'Abernon had been appointed as Great Britain's Ambassador in Berlin and was ordered to Poland to observe the negotiations between Poland and Soviet Russia.⁴⁷

The Russo-Polish War began in 1920 when Poland and Russia were unable to reach a settlement over the disputed territory between them. Just months before the war the Soviet government invited Poland to negotiate a settlement. Although Poland accepted the proposal, no settlement was reached because neither country was willing to grant concessions.⁴⁸

V. I. Lenin, with the assistance of Lev Trotsky, provided strategic guidance for the Russian Army. As Western Europe had feared, Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks hoped that the Russo-Polish War might be an initial skirmish in what would become a global revolution. ⁴⁹

On 25 April 1920, the charismatic leader of Poland, Josef Pilsudski, successfully attacked Zhitomir along the Polish frontier. Pilsudski's campaign plan was to continue to move east from Poland into Russia to seize Kiev and then turn northward and

attack the left wing of his Russian adversary. Eleven days later his armies split the Soviet forces in the northwest Ukraine and entered Kiev.

Prior to the outbreak of war, Pilsudski had deployed his First and Fourth Armies, with a Reserve Army in northern Poland. In southern Poland, he positioned the Third, Second and Sixth Armies. Pilsudski only had about 120,000 men and the small size of this army would later put him at a disadvantage (see Appendix B).⁵⁰

Although outnumbered, Pilsudski, as well as the Russians, were matched evenly in technology. Both sides had been armed by allies with tanks, artillery, and airplanes; however, the Russians had been given more than the Polish Army.⁵¹

As a result of the Polish successes, General M. N. Tukhachevski was put in command of the Russian Western Front. In northern Poland, Tukhachevski's Western Front comprised the Fourth, Fifteenth, Third, Sixteenth Armies and the IIId Cavalry Corps. In southern Poland, the Army of the South-West commanded by General Alexander Yegorov, comprised the Twelfth and Fourteenth Armies and five divisions of cavalry under Boudienny. The combined total of both armies was approximately 200,000 men.⁵² Because of the size and capabilities of the forces under his command,

Tukhachevski was confident of success as he moved to expel Polish invaders.

Tukhachevski, who was known for his single-mindedness, decided to attack toward the enemy's center of gravity which he determined to be Warsaw, the capital of Poland. Clausewitz defined the center of gravity as the hub of all power and movement upon which everything depends.⁵³

From May to June 1920, the Russian offensive recaptured Kiev, Zhitomir, several other key cities and swept the Ukraine of Poles. At this point Pilsudski wanted to negotiate. But, Tukhachevski knew he could beat the Polish Army, and he also knew that the Bolsheviks still viewed Poland as the bridge to the West for spreading revolution in Europe.⁵⁴

During July, the Russian Army advanced to within 300 miles of Dwina, Poland. Soon the Polish Army became discouraged and incapable of resistance. The Polish Army was spread over 1,000 kilometers of Polish territory without sufficient forces for defense, much less attack.⁵⁵ Tukhachevski was so confident of victory that he paid little attention to the activities and movements of the Polish forces opposing him.⁵⁶

In July, Viscount D'Abernon arrived in Poland and met with government leaders in Warsaw. Since he

stayed in Warsaw for the next several months, he was able to observe and write an excellent overall account of the Battle of Warsaw. His initial notation on 27 July stated that unless an armistice was signed within a few days it would be necessary to evacuate Warsaw and form a new base at Posen or Cracow.⁵⁷ He saw no likelihood that the Polish Army could successfully defend Warsaw.

Everyone in Warsaw pleaded for an armistice or evacuation of the city; however, Pilsudski planned to take the initiative through a massive counterattack. He had always been known for being unorthodox in his methods. He was infamous for being a student of the school of open air strategy "La Strategic de Plein Air" and claimed his series of victories had been obtained by methods in which troops moved freely in large spaces.⁵⁸ Pilsudski's thoughts were reinforced by Polish General Rozwadowski who said that Polish troops had peculiar qualities -- defensive tactics invariably failed while the offensive succeeded.⁵⁹

While the Polish staff in Warsaw continued to plead for evacuation, Pilsudski retired to his study in Belvedere Palace and on the 5th of August developed his counterattack plan.⁶⁰ First, he realized that

he could not counterattack simply to hold Warsaw. He needed to gain the initiative and bolster the morale of his army while destroying the morale of the Russian Army. By this time, Polish troops were concentrated and centered along a line 20 kilometers north and south of Warsaw.⁶¹

But where would Pilsudski obtain the troops he needed for the counterattack? He withdrew units from forces defending Warsaw and Lwow. He decided to mass his army on the southern flank of the Russian front, and if possible, drive north (see Appendix C).

Pilsudski needed a leader, someone of great courage and drive to lead the counterattack. Thinking no one suitable, he left Warsaw on the 12th of August and proceeded by motor car up the left bank of the Vistula River. Pilsudski placed himself at the head of the five and one-half divisions and led the counterattack.⁶²

Meanwhile Tukhachevski had already divided his Russian Armies and sent them in three directions. First, he detached a considerable force to advance along the Prussian border to take Thorn. Second, he detached a still larger body to move West with a view to crossing the Vistula River below Warsaw and to attack from the West. Finally, he allowed the force on the extreme left to devote its attention to the

capture of Lwow instead of protecting the main attack.⁶³ Tukhachevski thought his army was coiled for the attack to finish Poland.

On the 16th of August, Pilsudski counterattacked the southern flank at dawn. Initially his force received only sporadic resistance as it broke through the thin crust of the Russian lines. After the breakthrough, his army continued north attacking Russian units and destroying supplies. As Pilsudski's counterattack force continued north, the Russian Armies disintegrated.

Although Pilsudski was flush with victory, he realized that he needed to return to Warsaw and organize an aggressive pursuit of the Russian Army. From 18-21 August, the pursuit continued; 15,000 Russian soldiers were captured while many others escaped into East Prussia.⁶⁴

The reasons for Pilsudski's success were twofold. First, his withdrawal back into Poland contributed to the culmination of Tukhachevski's Armies. Second, the counterattack on the Russian's weak southern flank allowed him to regain the initiative. But there were also several errors committed by Tukhachevski.

First, Tukhachevski had relied upon his cavalry commander Boudienny and his troops to keep the Polish right occupied; however, Boudienny failed. Second,

the Russian Army became overconfident because it believed the Poles were so dispirited as to be incapable of effecting any surprise. Finally, prior to the counterattack Tukhachevski had come up against such severe fighting in other parts of the field that he had withdrawn the troops necessary to attempt to protect his flank and lines of communication.⁶⁵

By analyzing Clausewitz's criteria, one can discern why Pilsudski was successful and Tukhachevski was not. First, surprise was a major factor. The Russians had been lulled into complacency by consecutive victories. As stated before, the Russians thought the Poles were so dispirited that they could not respond to the constant attack. Pilsudski's counterattack with five and one-half divisions surprised and destroyed Tukhachevski's Army.

Pilsudski used the second criterion, benefit of terrain, to his advantage. He ensured the movements of his troops were conducted on routes through valleys and behind mountains to mask their movements.

The third criterion, the Polish counterattack, was the pivotal factor in this defense. The Polish Army counterattacked swiftly and decisively at the decisive point with overwhelming numbers and destroyed Tukhachevski's Army. As Pilsudski and his generals said, the Poles always fought harder when they attacked.

The strength of the theater of operations was the fourth criterion. At the beginning of the Polish campaign, the Polish Army was far from its base of support and had inadequate facilities for its lines of communication.⁶⁶ However, as it withdrew back into Poland, the Polish Army became stronger as its lines of communication shortened. Conversely, like Napoleon's Army, the Russian Army became weaker the deeper it moved into Poland.

Popular support, the fifth criterion, was an important factor for Pilsudski and his Army. Pilsudski relied on the intelligence he received from the local Polish population who watched every move of Tukhachevski's Army. Popular support worked against Tukhachevski, his army was vulnerable to sabotage and partisan attacks while it was in Poland. Finally, the sixth criterion, exploitation of the moral factors, was important in the Russo-Polish War. Initially, the Polish Army's courage was high, especially after successfully taking Zhitomir and Kiev. However, its courage began to wane once the Russians began to defeat them on the battlefield. By counterattacking, the Polish Army was able to regain the initiative and exploit the moral factor of courage. On the other hand, the Russian's courage was shattered. During the

counterattack whole units just disintegrated -- often without firing a shot.

Finally, Pilsudski understood the relationship between attack and defense as described by Clausewitz. Too weak to continue his offense starting in May, he assumed the defense until he sensed the Russians had culminated. Sensing the Russian weakness he massed his counterattack force and struck one of the Russian Army's decisive points, the weak southern flank and attacked north to destroy troops and supplies.

By analyzing Clausewitz's thoughts on defense, as well as his criteria, one can conclude they were practical and functional when viewed in the context of the Russo-Polish War. Pilsudski also benefited from the errors committed by Tukhachevski. The next analysis will look at a campaign fought seventy years later called **Operation Desert Storm**.

IV. DESERT STORM

Iraq was equipped with modern systems of Soviet and Western design and combat-experienced by eight years of war with Iran. Further, its senior military leaders had planned and executed corps-sized maneuvers in combat. The Iraqi army was large, possessed a professional officer corps, and had the potential to expand through national mobilization.⁶⁷

By world standards, Iraq's army was formidable and the fourth largest. On the 2nd of August 1990, over

100,000 troops from the Iraqi Army invaded Kuwait. Within 36 hours the Iraqi Army was in total control of Kuwaiti key areas.⁶⁸

President Bush, under the banner of world opinion, objected strongly to Saddam Hussein's actions. He established four broad strategic aims concerning Iraq and its occupation of Kuwait. President Bush wanted to compel the Iraqi Army to leave Kuwait, restore the legitimate government of Kuwait, maintain the safety of U.S. citizens and property, and finally insure peace and stability in the region.⁶⁹

Several of these strategic aims were reflected in United Nations Resolution 660 which was approved by the UN Security Council on 2 August 1990. President Bush's strategy, as well as UN Resolution 660, propelled the world into taking diplomatic, economic sanctions, and finally military action in the Persian Gulf.⁷⁰

The invasion of Kuwait would drive the United States and Coalition forces to plan and execute **Operation Desert Shield/Storm**. Eventually this campaign would destroy most of Saddam Hussein's military might but not topple him from power.

Saddam Hussein thought by quickly seizing Kuwait; he would be able to dominate the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Persian

Gulf region. Saddam Hussein's strategy was designed to avoid a war and instead obtain a negotiated settlement, so he focused only on the political outcome of the seizure of Kuwait and its resources.⁷¹ Colonel James Pardew, Director of Foreign Intelligence, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, believed that Saddam Hussein could not have imagined that in a matter of months he would be involved in a war with the United States and Coalition forces.⁷² It was this lack of vision that caused Saddam Hussein and Iraq to pay dearly over the next six months.

Iraq's military actions in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations can be divided into three phases: the invasion of Kuwait in August, the deterrence period from September 1990 to January 1991, and the defensive phase during **Operation Desert Storm** in January and February 1991.⁷³

The following is a very brief discussion of Iraqi offensive operations during the invasion of Kuwait. Although the Iraqi Army would meet limited resistance from the small Kuwaiti Army, it still planned and executed a relatively complex combined arms operation that called for round the clock, ground, sea and air operations. Upon successful completion of the invasion phase, the Iraqi Army initiated its deterrence phase.⁷⁴

During this deterrence phase, Iraq's General Army Headquarters built a theater defense in depth designed to deter a Coalition ground operation by threatening the attacker with high casualties. Saddam Hussein probably never believed that he could win against the Coalition forces. But, if he could gain any sort of negotiated settlement through deterrence of an attack or by stalemate on the battlefield, in his eyes, he would still be victorious.⁷⁵

The final phase -- the defensive battle against the Coalition air and ground offensive -- was the least desirable situation from the Iraqi viewpoint. Open conflict would result from the failure of Saddam Hussein's political strategy of deterrence. If conflict resulted, Iraq's military strategy during this phase would be simple. One, survive the air operation with basic military capabilities intact. Two, attempt to draw Israel into the war making it a Coalition buster. Finally, the Iraqi armed forces had to inflict heavy casualties on the attacker leading to a battlefield stalemate and forcing the Coalition to negotiate. Iraq hoped to achieve a stalemate by conducting the same defensive operations it found to be highly successful in the Iran-Iraq War.⁷⁶ By the beginning of the defensive battle in February 1991,

the Pentagon estimated the number of Iraqi troops deployed in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations to be approximately 540,000 troops.⁷⁷ The Iraqis were prepared to conduct a stubborn defense based on their experiences in the Iran-Iraq War.

After the eight year Iran-Iraq war ended, the lessons learned on Iraqi operations and tactics were written down in The National Training Center Handbook 100-91, The Iraqi Army, Organization and Tactics. The handbook states that the strategic objective was the first consideration in assuming a defensive posture. The next most important reasons to employ defensive operations were to achieve political objectives and wait for reinforcements.⁷⁸

Iraq employs two types of defense: static and mobile. Infantry divisions are more likely to assume a static defense while mechanized infantry and armored divisions assume a mobile defense.

The Iraqis decided to employ a static defense in Kuwait. The goal of a unit in a static defense is to allow no penetration of its forward line. To be successful it emplaces extensive obstacle belts forward of its main defensive line. The army attempts to make the obstacles so formidable that the enemy will not attack them, but instead will attack where Iraqi forces have deliberately left gaps that are

backed up by fixed defenses in depth. These fixed defenses will slow the attacker enough so that Iraqi heavy forces can counterattack against the flanks of the stalled penetration. At this point all weapons will be used to destroy the enemy. Timing of the counterattack is key to the success of the defense.⁷⁹

Regardless of the type of the defense, Iraqi doctrine stresses that counterattack is key. The size of the counterattack force depends on the size of the penetrating force. For major penetrations involving one or more enemy divisions, corps level reserves are committed. To destroy a penetrating enemy force, armor-heavy counterattacks against the flanks of the penetration are preferred.⁸⁰

This is exactly how the Iraqi Army arrayed its units during its defensive campaign in 1991. The Iraqi Army established the "Saddam Line", which was the defensive position along the Kuwaiti/Saudi Arabian border. In keeping with doctrine, the Iraqi Army built a fairly extensive defensive line hoping to inflict a majority of casualties there. However, the Saddam Line was comprised of conscripts and reserve forces, so the foundation of the defense rested on the least professional and motivated force.⁸¹

The second major line of defense was the

operational reserve, the Republican Guard Forces which had moved north in September, from Kuwait, into southern Iraq. Saddam Hussein, as well as the Coalition forces, viewed the Republican Guard Forces as the Iraqi operational center of gravity.⁸² As the operational reserve, the Republican Guard Forces were the major counterattack force in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations. Because of this, the Republican Guard Forces were kept well-behind forward lines and were well fed and far better protected than the soldiers occupying the Saddam Line.⁸³ During the air operation, Iraq's frontline defensive soldiers were extremely vulnerable to multiple B-52 strikes and compounded with the resulting lack of food and water caused enormous wear and tear on their nerves.⁸⁴

The strategy of the U.S. and Coalition forces was to isolate and contain Iraq while applying international and political sanctions that would force the withdrawal of Iraqi forces and restore the legitimate government of Kuwait.⁸⁵ While the U.S. and Coalition forces tried diplomatic and economic sanctions over a period of six months, Saddam Hussein continued reinforcing his defense in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations.

Once it became apparent sanctions would not succeed, the U.S. and Coalition leadership

transitioned to planning for military objectives to eject Iraqi troops from Kuwait and to restore Kuwait's legitimate government. Operationally the U.S. and Coalition forces wanted to attain a swift, decisive outcome. They wanted to destroy the Iraqi air force; theater command and control; the Republican Guard Force; and the Iraqi nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons capability. They also wanted to isolate the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations to cut off logistical support. A modern, technologically superior, well-trained force using AirLand Battle doctrine would be used to attain these objectives.⁸⁶

From 16 January until 24 February 1991, the Coalition forces mounted a heavy, thorough air operation that struck at strategic, operational and tactical targets. One of the targets at the strategic and operational level was the Command, Control and Communications (C3) network.⁸⁷ C3 nodes are comparable to a nerve center; once it is destroyed the Iraqi Army would be paralyzed and unable to react.

On the 24th of February the U.S. and Coalition troops totaling 514,000 troops began their ground offensive with supporting attacks on both flanks and a feint in the center by the 1st Cavalry Division.⁸⁸ On the western flank the XVIII Airborne Corps attacked to secure As Salman Airfield and protect the Coalition

west flank. Under the XVIII Corps, the 101st Air Assault Division conducted the largest air assault operation in history to secure a forward operating base in Iraq.⁸⁹ On the eastern flank the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and Arab Coalition forces fixed Iraqi forces along the gulf coast and Kuwait city. The VII Corps, as the main effort, in the center and XVIII Airborne Corps on the west would later conduct a "left hook" to the west of the Iraqi defenses to envelop them. It would then strike deep to sever Iraqi lines of communication, isolate and defeat the Republican Guard Forces (see Appendix D).⁹⁰

Because of the rapid, devastating success of the U.S. and Coalition forces in the initial battles, General Norman Schwarzkopf moved up the timing of the main attack by 14 hours. From the beginning of the offensive operation there was never any evidence of any Iraqi operational plan to be executed.⁹¹ The XVIII Airborne Corps continued to attack west of the Saddam line while Lieutenant General Frank's VII Corps attacked in the center with the 1st Infantry Division as the vanguard penetrating the Saddam line. In the east, Arab Coalition forces began their attack into Kuwait.⁹²

On the 26th of February, the VII Corps turned 90 degrees to the east, fixed the Republican Guard

Forces and opened a corridor for units of the XVIII Airborne Corps to continue their attack to the east after having secured the Coalition's west flank. Throughout the theater of operations, U.S. and Coalition forces maintained the initiative.⁹³

U.S. and Coalition forces continued attacking throughout the night of 26 February. The VII Corps made the main attack against three Republican Guard Armored Divisions and parts of other Iraqi formations to include the Jihad Corps. XVIII Airborne Corps pressed the attack northeast around VII Corps. The U.S. and Coalition forces attacked through the night and during the day of 27 February toward the Iraqi city of Basra and the Coast of Kuwait.⁹⁴

On the morning of 28 February, the Republican Guard Divisions were effectively routed and incapable of further coordinated resistance. At 0500 hours, the U.S. and Coalition forces achieved the military objectives of the operation, President Bush called for the U.S. and Coalition forces to cease further offensive operations.⁹⁵

By examining Clausewitz's six criteria for a defense, it is possible to analyze the Iraqi Army's defensive campaign.

The first criterion was surprise. The only surprise the Iraqi Army achieved was its

initial invasion of Kuwait, and the attack on the unoccupied town of Khafji.⁹⁶ Any other Iraqi attempts to achieve surprise were checked by a U.S. and Coalition technological superiority.

The second criterion, benefits of terrain, was used fairly effectively at the tactical level. Individual fighting positions, as well as tank positions, were well dug, well camouflaged and, therefore, were somewhat difficult to find during the air operation. Also during the final hours of the battle, elements of the Republican Guard Forces in reverse slope defenses were able to momentarily harass the U.S. VII Corps offensive. Because of a heavy sandstorm, several times elements of VII Corps were unable to detect the Republican Guard Division's reverse slope defense until they were fired on by the Iraqis.⁹⁷

The third criterion, counterattack, seemed to have been only partially understood by the Iraqis. The Iraqis clearly wanted to use their armored forces to deliver a blow by a violent counterattack against Coalition armored formations. But they were unable to do so because the means to command and control their formations had been destroyed during the air operation of the previous forty days. This allowed the Coalition forces to retain the initiative throughout the campaign.

The fourth criterion, the strength of the theater of operations, began and stayed as a disadvantage for the Iraqi Army. After all, the army was not operating in its own country, so it had to establish lines of communication in order to supply the army. During the deterrence phase, the Iraqi Army attempted to build a strong logistical base for its frontline troops to negate the sparse theater of operations. By the beginning of the defensive phase much of the stockpiled supplies had been destroyed because of the air operation.⁹⁸

The fifth criterion, popular support, was non-existent for the Iraqis. Enmity towards them was fomented in Kuwait immediately after the occupation force took over and rumors spread of Iraqi atrocities. As the occupation continued, Iraq also lost popular support outside of the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations because of the ability of the U.S. to form a cohesive anti-Iraq Coalition.⁹⁹

The sixth criterion is the exploitation of moral forces. Saddam Hussein never had a chance to galvanize his moral forces even as he tried to convince his army and the Arab world that he was fighting for the freedom of all Arabs. Also, the U.S. and Coalition ground forces negated his attempts

through an effective psychological operation effort in conjunction with the air operation.¹⁰⁰ This helped the U.S. and Coalition forces to greatly erode the moral forces of the frontline Iraqi units before the ground war even started.

V. CONCLUSION

By examining the theory and doctrine, as well as the two campaigns, two things become apparent. First, early-twentieth century campaigns modelled along Clausewitz's theory of defense were usually successful. Second, what was true during the early twentieth-century may no longer be true now -- it depends. The key is to understand Clausewitz's caveat about "all things being equal."

Early in the twentieth-century when armies were symmetrical the defense was stronger in the practical sense. If all things such as numbers of troops, technology, and the Army's experience and professionalism were equal, then the statement held true. Defensive campaigns that also utilized the theory of exhaustion were often successful. The Russo-Polish key was withdrawing until its enemy had reached its culmination. At this point the defending army conducted a counterattack to regain the initiative. This is precisely what General Phull planned during the Russian Campaign of 1812.

Clausewitz's six criteria for defense can be used to analyze why certain defensive campaigns are not always the stronger form of war. The lessons learned from the analysis provide a guideline for future operations planners.

The first criterion, surprise, was used extremely well by Pilsudski. By maneuvering units into their counterattack position at night hidden by terrain, he was able to launch his counterattack against Tukhachevski undetected, thereby attaining complete surprise. However, in the Gulf campaign, Saddam Hussein and his commanders were constantly surprised by Coalition forces. From the moment Saddam Hussein realized there would be no amphibious assault on Kuwait city, to the final hours of the campaign when the Republican Guard Forces attempted to escape, he continued to be surprised. Saddam Hussein attempted to use surprise to his advantage such as the attack on Khafji. Although this surprised the Coalition, it was the one major attempt by the Iraqi Army.¹⁰¹

The second criterion, benefit of terrain, provides a defensive advantage. Whether the terrain is hilly and forested or flat desert, the defender can always use it to his advantage. Pilsudski used the terrain to conceal his counterattack force. The Iraqi Army was able to conceal many of its positions at the

tactical level even throughout the air operation. However, at the operational level it is difficult to conceal major formations due to the modern technology used by intelligence systems of today.

The third criterion, the role of the counterattack was effectively demonstrated in both campaigns.

Pilsudski successfully executed his while Saddam Hussein did not. Pilsudski's counterattack ensured Poland's success in its war with Russia. Conversely, the inability of Saddam Hussein's Army to launch any counterattack against the U.S. and Coalition forces caused a rapid defeat of his army.

The fourth criterion, the strength of the theater of operations, was a decisive defensive advantage for Pilsudski as he was in his own country and thus was able to stay near his bases and maintain his lines of supply. Saddam Hussein was not in his own country when he invaded Kuwait and this was a disadvantage. During the defense he had to establish lines of communication to build up a large base of supply. He did stockpile supplies, but most were destroyed by the U.S. and Coalition forces air operations.

The fifth criterion, popular support benefited Pilsudski. However the Iraqi Army suffered greatly from a lack of popular support. Pilsudski was able to use popular support throughout his campaign to provide

intelligence and supplies to his Army. However, Saddam Hussein immediately lost popular support in Kuwait after the invasion. Later on he lost popular support throughout the Gulf region and Arab world.

The final criterion, the exploitation of moral factors, benefited Pilsudski, but worked against Saddam Hussein. As stated before by one of Pilsudski's generals, Polish soldiers were more accustomed to attacking than defending. By believing this, the Polish Army was able to build on its initial counterattack success to rout the Russian Army. But for Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army, the exploitation of the moral factor by the U.S. and Coalition ground forces rapidly accelerated the defeat of the Iraqi Army. The disintegration began with the onset of the air operation and culminated with the U.S. and Coalition's ground offensive.

But like Tukhachevski there were other reasons for Saddam Hussein's failure. First, Saddam Hussein's flawed political strategy and inept planning resulted in the poor execution of the campaign plan. Saddam Hussein was the overall military commander, but as General Swartzkopf said, " he was no general."¹⁰²

But even if Saddam Hussein had turned all of Clausewitz's criteria into advantages and had given sound strategic guidance that was properly translated

into operational engagements and tactical battles he probably still would have lost. Why? Because Saddam Hussein did not understand the asymmetry of forces he was facing. Saddam Hussein faced a highly trained, technologically advanced army. The U.S. Army was also well led by professionals who understood the operational art and designed a sound campaign based on valid doctrine. The well equipped and well trained U.S. and Coalition forces would not allow the Iraqis to execute the campaign plan as they had envisioned. However, Iraq was not the only country to make this mistake.

This same error in assessment was made by the Argentinians during the Falklands war. Driven by political objectives, the Argentinians thought they could rapidly invade and seize the Falkland Islands and then negotiate with the British.¹⁰³

But like President Bush, Prime Minister Thatcher condemned the invasion and after gaining government support, sent the British armed forces to retake the Falklands. Although the Argentinian and British Armies were fairly matched in technology, other factors caused an asymmetry that the Argentinians could not defeat. The poor leadership of the Argentine officers led to the weak and ineffective defensive effort on the islands. Conversely the

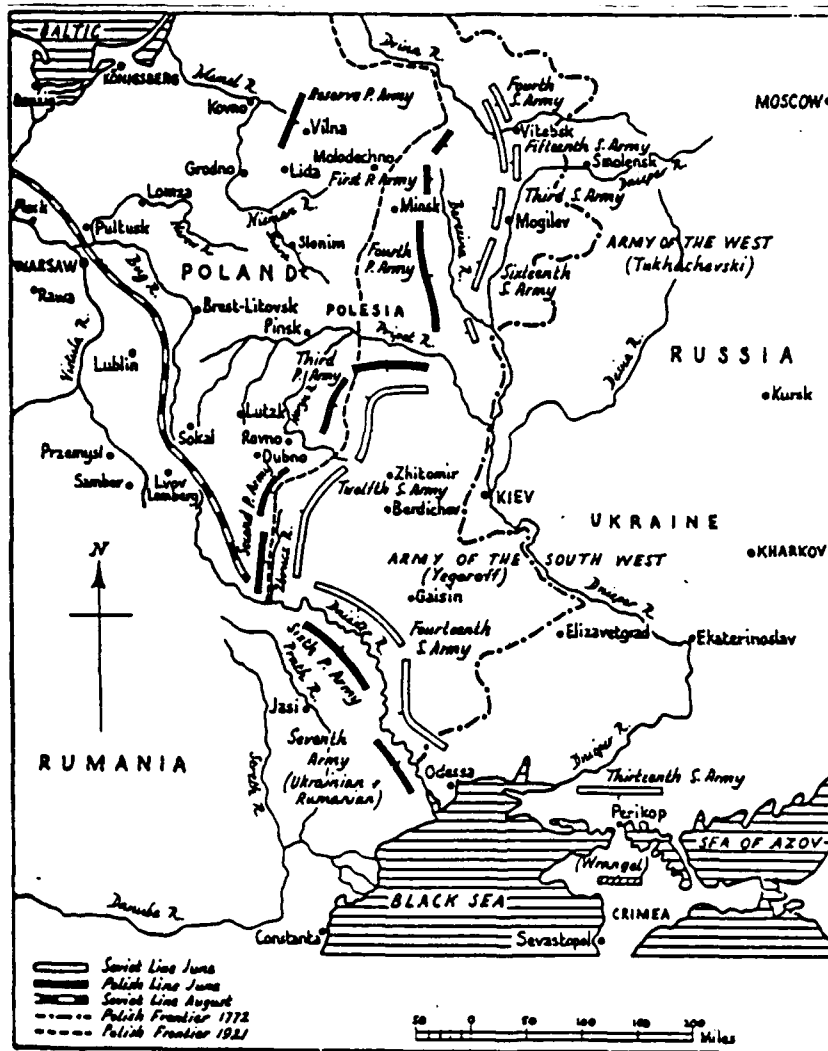
professional leaders of the British armed forces allowed them to take the initiative and win the Falkland Island's War.¹⁰⁴

In summary, Clausewitz's theoretical assertion that all things being equal, defense is the stronger form of war is still true. But to paraphrase FM 100-5, although defense may be the less decisive form of war, it may nonetheless be stronger than the offense. In other words, if all things are not equal, then the commander must understand the nature of the asymmetry between his and the enemy's army and then use the advantages available to offset any disadvantages and win. Clausewitz's six criteria which are reflected in FM 100-5 provide an initial guideline for planning defensive campaigns.

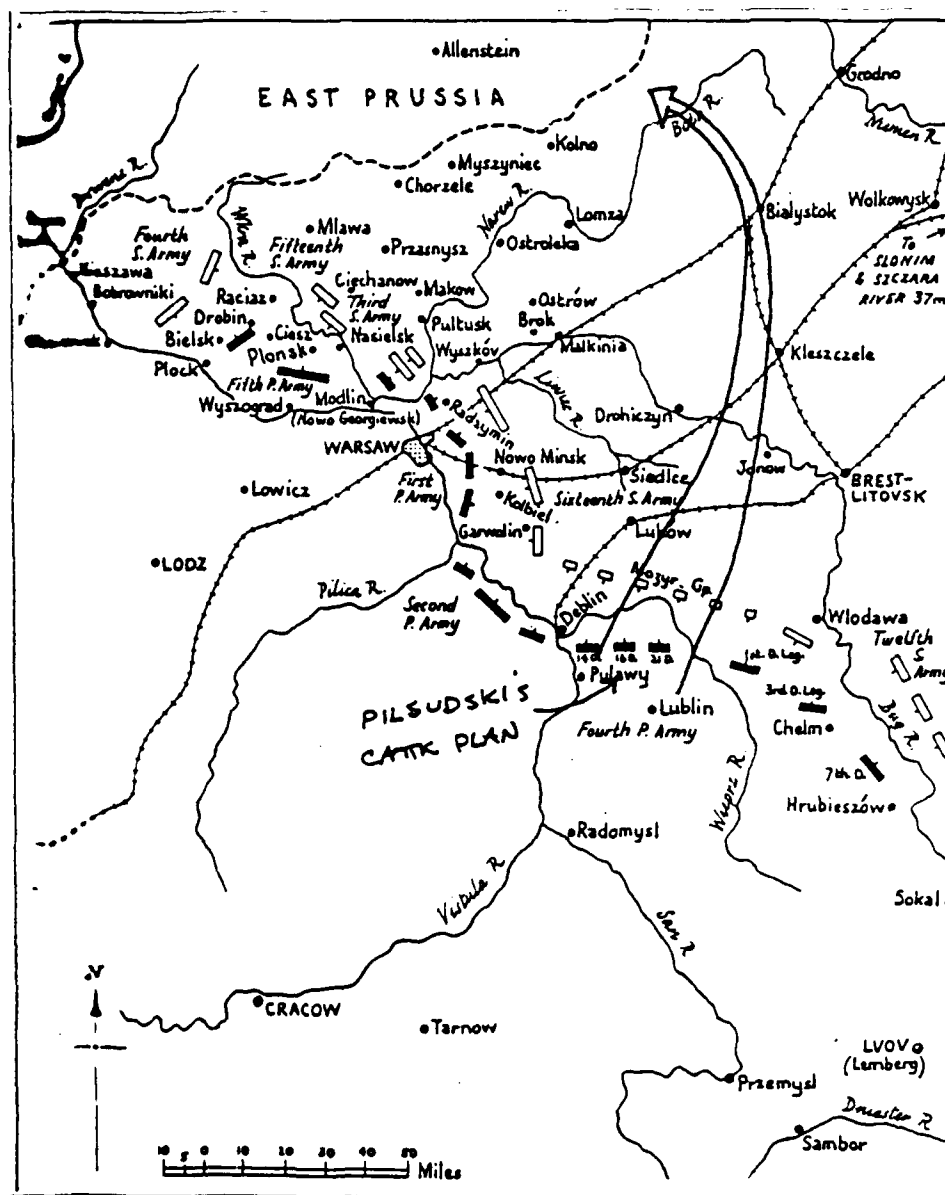
Appendix A: Comparison chart of defense.

| Clausewitz's Six Criteria | FM 100-5 Advantages |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Surprise | Surprise Principle of War |
| Benefit of Terrain | Familiar terrain Cvr & Concealment |
| Counterattack (Concentric Attk) | Adv siting wpns Cvr & Concealment |
| Strength of Theater of Operations | Shorter Lines of Communication |
| Popular Support | Friendly Population |
| Exploitation of Moral Factors | Leadership Dyn. of Cbt Pwr |

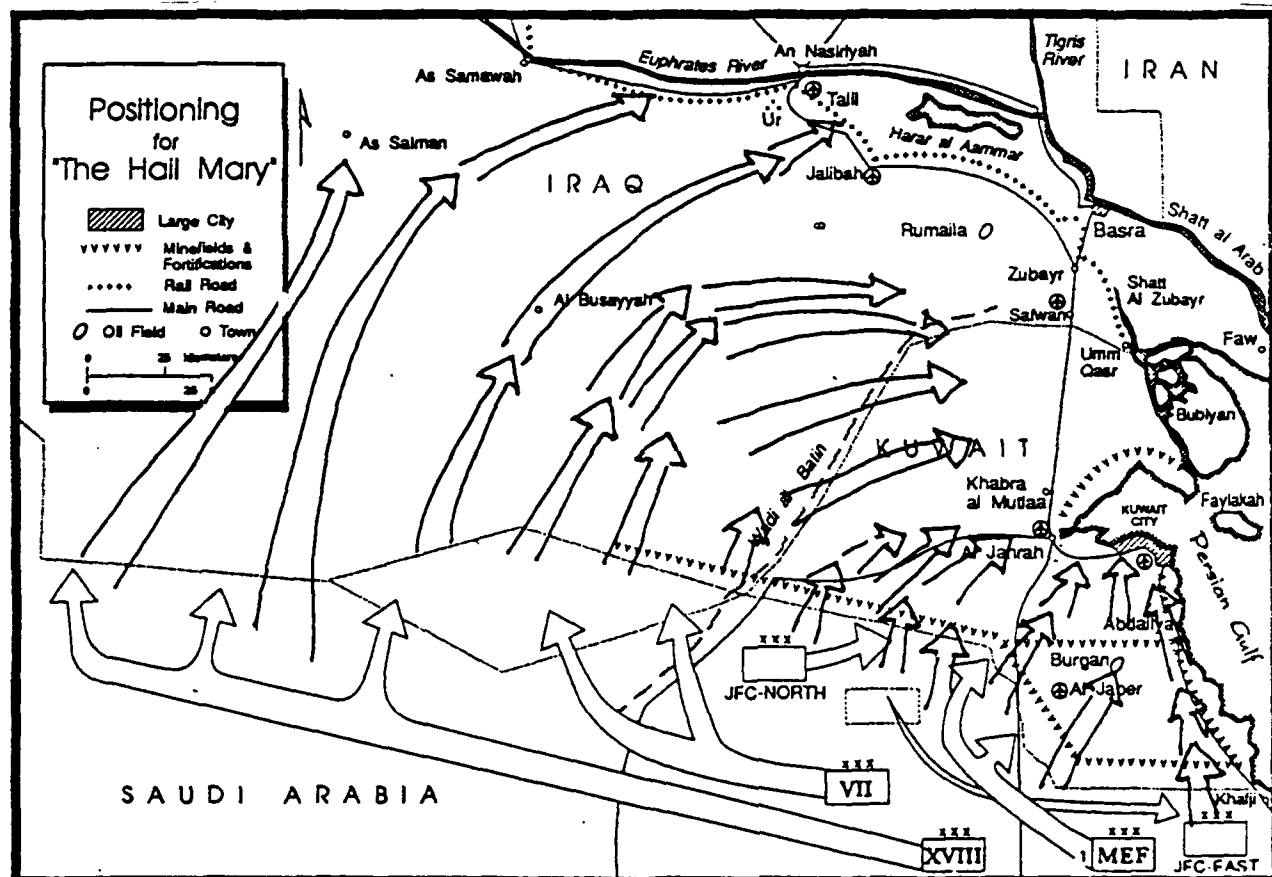
Appendix B: Map of Russo-Polish Campaign



Appendix C: Map of Battle of Warsaw.



Appendix D: Map of Desert Storm



ENDNOTES

¹Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, Princeton, New Jersey,: (Princeton University Press, 1976), 357.

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³Ibid., 294.

⁴Ibid., 129.

⁵Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, Operations, (Washington, DC: January 1993), 7-29.

⁶Ibid., 7-29.

⁷Webster's II Dictionary, (1984), s.v. "Strong."

⁸Von Clausewitz, On War, 357.

⁹Ibid., 358.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 359.

¹²Ibid., 357.

¹³Ibid., 380-381.

¹⁴Ibid., 358.

¹⁵Peter Paret, Clausewitz and the State, Princeton, New Jersey: (Princeton University Press, 1985), 223.

¹⁶Carl Von Clausewitz, The Campaign of 1812 in Russia (London, Greenhill Books & California: Presidio Press., 1992), 14-15.

¹⁷Ibid., 14.

¹⁸Ibid., 15.

¹⁹Ibid., 15.

²⁰Ibid., 16.

- ²¹Ibid., 17.
- ²²Peter Paret, Clausewitz and the State, 225.
- ²³Ibid., 225.
- ²⁴David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1966), 791-792.
- ²⁵Von Clausewitz, On War, 363.
- ²⁶Ibid., 360.
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸Ibid., 357.
- ²⁹Ibid., 365.
- ³⁰FM 100-5, Operations, dated January 1993, 7-11.
- ³¹Von Clausewitz, On War, 367.
- ³²Ibid., 365.
- ³³Ibid.
- ³⁴Ibid., 363.
- ³⁵Patrick M. Cronin, "Clausewitz Condensed", Military Review, (August 1985), 46.
- ³⁶Von Clausewitz, On War, 366.
- ³⁷Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, Operations (Washington, DC: August 1992), 6-10.
- ³⁸Ibid., 7-25.
- ³⁹Ibid, 5-2 to 5-3.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., 7-29.
- ⁴¹Ibid., 2-7 & 2-9.
- ⁴²Ibid.
- ⁴³Ibid.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., 7-32.

⁴⁵Von Clausewitz, On War, 375.

⁴⁶Viscount D'Abernon, The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 11.

⁴⁷Ibid., 17.

⁴⁸J.F.C. Fuller, A Military History of the Western World, Volume III From the American Civil War to the End of World War II., (New York, New York, Da Capo Press, Republication from 1957), 342.

⁴⁹Thomas Kane, "The Russo-Polish War of 1920", Strategy and Tactics, (December 1992), 10.

⁵⁰Fuller, Military History of the Western World, Volume III, 342.

⁵¹W. Bruce Lincoln, Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991) 405.

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⁵³Von Clausewitz, On War, 596.

⁵⁴Ibid., 405

⁵⁵Viscount D'Abernon, The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World, 26.

⁵⁶Ibid., 30.

⁵⁷Ibid., 38

⁵⁸Ibid., 47.

⁵⁹Ibid., 58.

⁶⁰Ibid., 82.

⁶¹Ibid., 75.

⁶²Ibid., 79.

⁶³Ibid., 81.

⁶⁴Ibid., 96-98.

⁶⁵Ibid., 87.

⁶⁶Ibid., 26.

⁶⁷James W. Pardew, "The Iraqi Army's Defeat in Kuwait," Parameters, (Winter 1991-92), 17.

⁶⁸Blackwell, James. Thunder in the Desert, New York: (Bantam Books, 1991), 71.

⁶⁹Field Manual 100-5, Operations, 7-3.

⁷⁰U.S. News & World Report, Triumph without Victory, 416.

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⁷²Ibid, 19.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷U.S. News & World Report, Triumph without Victory, 403.

⁷⁸Editor, The Iraqi Army, Organization & Tactics, Fort Irwin, CA: (177th Armored Brigade, National Training Center, January 1991), 87.

⁷⁹Ibid., 97.

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⁸⁴Ibid., 275.

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- ⁸⁶Ibid., 8 & 9.
- ⁸⁷U.S. News and World Report, Triumph without Victory, 266-267.
- ⁸⁸Editors, "Tracking the Storm", Military Review, (September 1991), 75.
- ⁸⁹FM 100-5, Operations, 7-26.
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- ⁹¹Craft, "An Operational Analysis of the Persian Gulf War," 5.
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- ⁹³FM 100-5, Operations, 7-27.
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- ¹⁰⁰Charles A. Horner, "The Air Campaign," Military Review, (September 1991), 25.
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- ¹⁰²James Blackwell, Thunder in the Desert, 13.
- ¹⁰³Hastings, Max and Jenkins, Simon, The Battle for the Falklands, New York, London, (W. Norton & Company, 1983), 48 to 49.
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